

February 10, 2026

SB342 – The Bottle Bill

Position – Favorable

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am writing to express our strong support for SB342, the Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program, commonly known as the Maryland Bottle Bill.

Maryland currently faces a significant waste challenge. Of the billions of beverages sold in recyclable containers each year, only approximately 25% are recycled. (1) The remaining billions of containers frequently end up in landfills, incinerators, along our roads, or contaminating our vital waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

The environmental and public health implications of this waste are severe:

- Impact on Aquatic Life: Plastic debris causes fatal ingestion and entanglement for over 800 species. Approximately 100,000 marine mammals die annually due to plastic pollution, and 86% of sea turtles are negatively affected. (2)
- Ecosystem Disruption: Beyond physical harm, degrading plastics release toxic chemical additives and endocrine disruptors. These pollutants can even inhibit oxygen-producing bacteria, threatening the fundamental balance of our ecosystem. (3)
- Persistence: These materials do not biodegrade; they remain in our environment for hundreds of years, continuously breaking down into increasingly dangerous fragments. (4)
- Microplastics: Plastic bottles break down into secondary microplastics through exposure to radiation and wave action. These particles have been detected in both tap and bottled drinking water, posing a direct threat to human health. (5)

While the Clean Water Act aims to make our waters "fishable and swimmable," it does not specifically regulate plastic beverage containers. This leaves the burden of cleanup to programs such as Mr. Trash Wheel, local municipalities, and volunteers. SB342 offers a common-sense, proactive solution by creating a deposit program. Similar programs in states like California and Oregon have proven successful in significantly increasing recycling rates and reducing litter. (6)

Passing SB342 will reduce landfill waste, protect our aquatic species, and ensure that containers are repurposed rather than left to pollute our environment. I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this essential legislation.

Sincerely,

Sharon Boies
Protect Our Streams

RESOURCES-

(1) Jan 9, 2026 — **Mr. Trash Wheel has removed more than 2.6 million beverage containers** from Baltimore Harbor. But across Maryland, only one quarter of beverage containers are recycled. <https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/redeem-cans-and-bottles-for-cash-at-mr-trash-wheels-event-raising-support-for-maryland-bottle-bill/>

(5) Dec 18, 2025 — **Microplastics have been detected in drinking water**, including both tap and bottled sources. A 2017 study that tested 159 samples from 14 ...[Read more https://earth.org/microplastics-in-water/](https://earth.org/microplastics-in-water/)

(4) Microplastics as a Threat to Aquatic Ecosystems and Human Health

The threat stemming from the occurrence of microplastics has become a global problem because of their ubiquitous bioavailability in the environment and the effects they have not only on aquatic organisms but also on humans. Further, microplastics can also bioaccumulate contaminants that lead to serious damage to aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11359092/>

(2) Plastic Pollution Affects Sea Life Throughout the Ocean

Photos document extent of the impact, which extends to the seafood people eat. Fish, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals can become entangled in or ingest plastic debris, causing suffocation, starvation, and drowning. Humans are not immune to this threat

<https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2018/09/24/plastic-pollution-affects-sea-life-throughout-the-ocean>

(3) Long-Term Environmental Consequences

Plastic bottles do not biodegrade, meaning they remain in the ecosystem for hundreds of years, notes the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#). Beyond direct injury, these plastics affect the ecosystem at a microscopic level. For example, toxic chemicals from degrading plastic can inhibit the oxygen production of *Prochlorococcus*, a type of bacteria responsible for generating significant amounts of the Earth's oxygen, according to The Ocean Cleanup.

(6) AI Overview - **These programs, most notably in California and Oregon, have proven highly effective. California boasts a 68% recycling rate, while Oregon achieves approximately 90%.** By providing a financial incentive of 5 to 10 cents per container, these systems significantly reduce litter and greenhouse gas emissions—cutting over 300,000 tons of emissions annually in California alone.

